

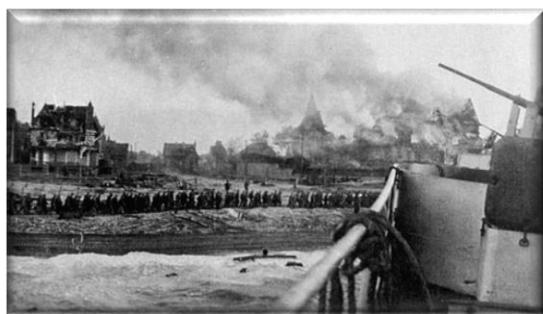
My Story – Aboard Landing Craft Infantry 375 – A W (Paddy) White. [27 May 2004]



For two or three days leading up to the invasion, all officers and crew on board our Infantry Landing Craft were confined to the ship. The tension amongst some of the crew was becoming apparent due mostly to inactivity. I remember the actual day very clearly. I was in the engine room during part of the voyage across the channel, but came up on the deck periodically. On board were 300-350 of the Royal Ulster Rifles, silently anticipating what was to lie ahead of them.

I will always remember the following magnificent sight: the skyline appeared to be covered with planes and gliders and as we got closer to France on looking astern, I saw many large ships laying offshore sending their shells non-stop onto pre-arranged pinpointed positions in France. [below, HMS *Antrim*]

Our skipper tried to get our craft as close as possible onto the beach but was prevented from doing so by either the very strong tide, rough seas or the iron obstacles strategically placed there to prevent us from beaching - or perhaps a combination of all three. Eventually we beached, but alas, at a cost to our hull which was torn open in a number of places by the iron obstacles on the beach. As the craft was badly damaged we hurriedly assisted the Army ashore, during this time, and for just a brief moment, I recognised one of the soldiers who lived in the next street to me in my home town back then. It was just one of those hello-goodbye situations, so I called to him **'good luck and safe home'**, I learned later that he was wounded but I was delighted to hear he got home safely. These brave soldiers had to wade and partly swim ashore with their equipment with one hand above their heads holding a rifle; some also had collapsible cycles on their shoulders. These heroes went ashore soaking wet not fully knowing what lay in store for them, but willing to die fighting for freedom. Not one of them, including our crew, gave thought to the dangers surrounding us. A special mention must be made of the two crew members who, whilst German sniping was continuing, swam ashore with guide lines tied to their waist and stood on the beach holding the ropes taught so that the soldiers could hold onto and be guided through the rough sea to shore.



After the soldiers were landed on the beach, I returned to the engine room which was then taking in sea water. I immediately informed the skipper and on returning to the engine room commenced breaking electrical circuits threatened by the water. Eventually I closed down the generators; by this time I was standing in water up to my waist, which was still rising, when I heard **'Abandon Ship'** I made my way up and onto the deck and saw that the craft was visually sinking, and jumped into the sea wading my way to shore. All the crew managed to get ashore and although wet, some of us were given short handle spades

which enabled us to dig trenches in the sand as the enemy were still sniping and strafing the beaches. By this time the tide had gone out and we could see that a part of the craft was suspended on the iron obstacles. One or two of the crew made their way back on board and onto the forward gun turret and commenced firing at the houses on the beach. The holes in the hull were quickly patched up temporary with concrete and clamps in order to get us back to the UK for a permanent repair. We were soon back again ferrying our troops to France and returning with German POWs.